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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a Goals 2000 project intended to redesign preservice teacher education, practicing teacher roles, and student learning experiences within a Professional Development School framework. The team includes teaching faculty from the University of Akron (Ohio) College of Education Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies, senior students in the elementary teacher education program, an assistant superintendent, principals and teachers from two urban elementary schools, and staff from the Summit (Ohio) County Educational Service Center-Technology Academy. The model for this project involves five components: structuring the collaborative; selecting the sites and participants; creating a shared vision; the intern/student teaching experience; and evaluation and dissemination. During the fall semester, interns spend two days a week with an assigned mentor-teacher. As interns become part of the class routine, they are encouraged to work with their mentor-teacher to design, deliver, implement, and evaluate models of new work. In the spring semester, the students engage in formal student teaching that includes an eight-week primary placement and an eight-week intermediate grade placement. The university faculty and grant coordinator remain on-site to develop relationships and to facilitate and teach classes on curriculum, evaluation, and professional issues. (JLS)

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TRANSFORMING TEACHER EDUCATION, TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING IN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL COLLABORATIVE: A WORK IN PROGRESS

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TRANSFORMING TEACHER EDUCATION, TEACHING AND STUDENT LEARNING IN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL COLLABORATIVE: A WORK IN PROGRESS

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Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to describe the evolution of a Goals 2000 project that was funded in excess of one quarter of a million dollars to redesign pre-service teacher education, practicing teacher roles and student learning experiences within a Professional Development School framework. Working together, two teaching faculty from the College of Education Department of Curricular and Instructional Studies, 15 senior students in the elementary teacher education program, an assistant superintendent, principals and teachers from two urban elementary schools, a grant coordinator who is also part-time faculty in the C & I department, and staff from the Summit County Educational Service Center- Technology Academy, joined to create a new vision of teaching and learning. It is believed by those involved in this project, that other practitioners in a variety of school settings will be able to incorporate many of these components to enhance both professional development and student outcomes. It is also believed that the process of collaboration needs to be chronicled as it is developing and shared with others moving into this type of relationship. It is an undertaking that requires constant review and a willingness to listen and incorporate new ideas and strategies as we grow together. This paper presents some of the new insights and adjustments that have made as we learn more about being partners in a developing collaboration.

Description of the Model: The model for this project involves five key components which are briefly described. Each component was an outgrowth of a dialogue between university and public school personnel, centering on how to transform teacher education and delivery to better prepare students for the Twenty-First Century. It was believed that to accomplish this, teachers would have to learn how to design and deliver relevant curriculum that engages students in meaningful learning experiences and which prepares them to access existing technology to achieve their learning outcomes. This has been identified as *new work* by the federally funded Summit County *New Work Project: New Work, New Knowledge, New Technology*. The challenge was to develop opportunities in which pre-service and in-service teachers could learn together and support each other as they became more proficient in designing good learning experiences which integrates technology for instructional purposes and problem solving.

1. Structuring the Collaborative*: Because we all have limited spheres of influence and resources, developing collaboratives is the

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*The primary partners in this collaborative were the University of Akron's College of Education and the Barberton Public Schools. The Summit County Educational Service Center also played a key role in providing the.

most effective way to implement change. It would not have been possible for us to develop a paradigm for improving professional development and delivery of instruction without the cooperation and collaboration between the University of Akron teacher education program and the Barberton Public Schools. Capitalizing on our strengths, needs and mutual goals, university faculty and the Assistant Superintendent of the Barberton Public Schools, met to determine how we could work together to improve the delivery of instruction. Initial discussions identified areas in which we could link our organizations to improve pre-service teaching skills, in-service teacher effectiveness and enhance the learning of the Barberton students. While the primary direction of the project was developed by these parties, it was agreed that the stakeholders would have to develop ownership of the project by being involved in as much of the decision making as possible. Therefore, suggestions by teachers, interns, administrators and researchers have be solicited, discussed and acted upon as quickly as possible. These suggestions have resulted in a number of significant changes in the initial design of the collaborative. (See TABLE 1).

As we work through the initial phase of the collaboration, a good deal of effort has been expended in trying to develop an active dialog between participants. School administrators and university faculty have scheduled bi-weekly meetings to discuss issues and "tinker" with the collaborative structures as needed. In addition, informal sharing of information on a regular basis provides ongoing opportunities for continual monitoring and adjusting.

Intern input is encouraged through a variety of avenues. They are keeping two dialog journals, one which they share weekly with their mentor teachers in which they discuss any issues they believe to be relevant to their professional growth. This became a private communication between the interns and mentors when we were informed that some mentors were avoiding being candid because they were concerned their comments might place them in an awkward position if they became public. The second journal is a dialogue between the interns and the two on-site university faculty and/or grant coordinator. These journals, which are collected and responded to every two weeks, contain reflections, frustrations and questions the interns have, and are also treated as personal and private. They provide a basis for discussion at group meetings and another source of insight into student concerns and growth as reflective teachers. In addition, students use class meetings, whole group meetings, observations of their teaching, informal encounter, telephone calls and faculty office hours to express their opinions, stress, questions and suggestions. They also talk among themselves and for the most part are involved in productive communications with their mentors.

Open communication with the mentor teachers has been harder to establish. Since we are in the infancy of our relationship, it appears that several teachers are not yet comfortable enough to share their concerns, questions and suggestions with the researchers. The infrequent mentor meetings which take the teachers out of their classrooms for the last 45 minutes of the day are also viewed as inconvenient by some. These meetings have been structured to encourage mentors to share how they are involving their interns and any ideas they have for modifying their collaborative relationships to make it more successful. At this stage, more often than not, teachers prefer to take their questions to their principals, who then share them with the researchers. We then try to clarify and respond to both the administrators and the teachers. Teacher journals will hopefully provide another source of communication for improving the project. While students

do this as part of their course requirement, mentors teachers are being paid a stipend ($100.00) to dialog in a private journal which they share only with their interns on a weekly basis, and to respond to four prompts during the semester in a journal which they share with the researchers. We have dubbed this "Journaling for Dollars," and added the money after being told by an intern that some mentors felt too overburdened to take the time to journal. In looking for an incentive that would provide our students with this type of support and us with important qualitative data, it was suggested that the money might be a sufficient motivator to encourage the additional time commitment.

2. Selecting the Sites and Participants: During the pilot year for any program, the selection of the right place and the right participants is crucial for success. The two elementary schools that were chosen as the appropriate setting for this project had a demonstrated history of being willing to engage in change. Both schools have been identified by the State of Ohio to receive Venture Capitol funds for innovative projects. These buildings are in an urban community which is in keeping with the urban mission of our university and college, and seemed like the logical place to begin our PDS partnership.

Fifteen elementary teacher education students were selected as interns based on interviews, courses needed to complete the program, GPAs, recommendations by faculty and their other strengths and interests. Participants had to be ready to student teach during the Spring semester and there had to be some common need for the courses to be taught in the field. The 15 selected were males and females who represented a range of ages and ethnic backgrounds. All expressed a desire for real experiences with children, to become more skilled at incorporating technology into instruction and an eagerness to become part of a school's culture. All had also been identified by faculty as having demonstrated good beginning skills for planning and teaching. In the six weeks they have been involved in this project, these 15 interns have formed a cohort group, helping each other and working together in the development of thematic units. They also are encouraged to plan visits to each other so they can observe other interns and their placements and provide feedback to each other while broadening their experiential base.

Mentor teacher selections were made at the building level by the principals and lead teachers, along with input from the assistant superintendent. Teachers included in this project were to have a genuine interest in working with pre-service students to develop curriculum and improve teaching skills, and they had to be identified as master teachers by their colleagues. Incentives for teacher participation involved $25,000 for each building which will be spent according to the wishes of the building teachers, additional technology for use with their students, and the help of an intern to teach and work with children in their class.

Because our need for 15 placements stretched the resources of the two buildings, the sites tried to accommodate us by including teachers who might not have chosen to participate in the creation of "new work" curriculum if the need for numbers was not there. We recognize this as an unfair burden to place on these teachers and we are plan to rectify this by reassigning some interns to a third elementary school and a middle school, into classrooms that are more supportive of the "new work" instruction we want modeled. This will result in the reassigning of some interns for the second Fall placement and for Spring student teaching. Our hope is that these new placements will be more consistent with the goals of the research project, as well as providing an opportunity for our collaboration to grow.

Plans have been discussed for involving university and school personnel in student and teacher selections in subsequent years, after we better know each other and the needs of the PDS program. We are also exploring the possibility of changing the structure of the internship period so that several interns are assigned to a teacher who exemplifies the integrated, thematic, active learning models of new work instruction. This will relieve school sites from the burden of including a large number of teachers, some of who are not comfortable with this type of learning environment, and it will provide the interns with placements that are more appropriate to this philosophy of teaching. We are hopeful, that it also will allow us to identify and invite classroom teachers to enter our doctoral program and become "clinical faculty," for future interns.

3. **Creating a Shared Vision:** It is a given that for a collaborative to be successful, parties must commit to achieving identified common goals and they must also create the structures that will allow them to work together towards those goals. It was important for all participants in this PDS project to develop and sustain a shared and compelling vision of what schooling should be. To accomplish this, a one week summer workshop, scheduled around the needs of the public school calendar, was planned. This workshop brought interns and partner teachers together to begin to articulate what good teaching should look like and to identify common needs and goals for their professional development. Discussion focused on the types of work that will engage children, how modern technology enables meaningful *new work*, and the importance of high teaching performance standards. This workshop served to help define the internship experience, identify projects and to begin to create a sense of community among the participants.

It became apparent during the summer workshop that the two buildings are very different in their approach to teaching and learning. One had established building-wide themes which they have been developing over a period of years and which dictated the focus of the units the interns would be creating. For the most part, these teachers were also more likely to have print-rich classrooms and more literature based, student focused learning environments. The second site had more teachers who relied on their text books and direct instruction. In general, they were less likely to have students actively involved in structuring their learning, but because they were not already committed to building themes, the interns had more flexibility to create a wider range of projects. Several teachers also seem comfortable with allowing their interns to create constructivist learning opportunities for the students, even though they did not often do so in their own teaching. The more traditional site was also the one with the better equipped computer lab but neither building has been fully wired nor have they received the additional computers the state is providing for all classrooms, kindergarten through fourth grade. This has delayed the full implementation of technology to support instruction, but the interns are incorporating suggestions for the appropriate use of technology in the integrated thematic units they are writing, and they are using available technology where appropriate.

At this point in time, it seems very doubtful that one week altered any teacher's vision of how he or she should teach, but it did seem to establish some common understandings and goals for the partnership. Teachers and interns were able to discuss and to some extent clarify their roles, and avenues of communication were opened. Many questions were asked, discussed and answered or left under consideration. Most interns felt their presence was welcome and that they had become a part of the school culture. Most teachers

also seemed enthusiastic about the opportunities, even though few were clear about how they would mentor and provide good learning opportunities for their intern. The week ended with more questions than answers, with a greater sense of responsibility to each other and with greater sense of pressure to find ways to make it work. That is the task we face daily as we continue to tinker with the process.

4. The Intern/Student Teaching Experience: One of the major purposes of the PDS experience is to provide pre-service teachers with increased opportunities to become successful in the classroom by immersing them in the school culture and partnering them with master teachers who serve as mentors. It is also an opportunity to empower master teachers and build links between the university and school communities as we join in pre-service teachers preparation.

During the Fall semester, interns in this project spend two days a week (Tuesday and Thursday) with an assigned mentor teacher. While they are encouraged to visit other classrooms in both buildings, most of their time is with their mentor. By the end of the Fall semester, each intern will have two eight week placements, instead of the three, five-week placements originally planned. Mentors felt the five week sessions were insufficient for them to establish the desired relationship and learning experiences for their interns.

As the interns became a part of the class routine, the mentor/intern teams were encouraged to work together to design, deliver, implement and evaluate models of *new work*. With few excepticns, it became clear that during the first placement the curricular themes would be largely developed by the interns working in pairs, supported by the researchers, with varying degrees of involvement from the mentor teachers during the planning phase. Perhaps this will change as relationships continue to grow, but perhaps the designing of "new work" curriculum will best be undertaken by professionals entering the field who do not yet have established patterns for planning instruction. It is hoped that mentors will take a more active role in guiding their interns as they implement, evaluate and restructure their instruction, and that they will become more heavily involved in the early planning with their second intern.

The two university faculty and the grant coordinator remain on-site to develop relationships, facilitate when possible, and to teach classes on curriculum, evaluation, and professional issues to the interns in the field. One of the advantages of this type of arrangement is that we are not locked into traditional class schedules to deliver the education courses students are taking on-site. We felt it was essential for interns to have the skills for evaluating language literacy as early in their internship as possible, so the month of September was devoted to providing this instruction. Follow-up instruction will continue throughout the semester. The technology class will largely be taught during the month of October by an expert in instructional resources. The computer lab in one of the schools, as well as the labs on campus will be used. In addition, six lap top computers, Alpha Smarts, QuickTake cameras, video cameras, and other materials have been or will soon be made available to the interns and their mentors to deliver instruction. Interns and teachers who are interested will receive additional instruction throughout the year so that they can continue to develop and refine their technological skills. Since it was decided during initial meetings with building representatives that some money for equipment would be reserved for later purchases as needs arose, we do not yet have all of the technical support we expect to have by the end of our

initial year. However, we now have a variety of equipment in service which can and is being used to deliver instruction. (See TABLE 2).

During the Spring semester, students will enter the student teaching phase of their professional training. Our teacher education program requires elementary education students to have both a primary (K-3rd grade) and an intermediate (4-8th grade) eight-week student teaching experience. Therefore, they will begin student teaching with the last teacher they partnered with in the Fall. It is hoped that this will facilitating the transition from intern to student teaching by placing our students back in a familiar environment. For the second placement, student teachers will be reassigned to their other internship mentor teacher. If internship placements are changed or if other student teaching assignments are made, then those intern/student teachers will be given opportunities to spend time in the new placements so they can become familiar with the classroom and do some preliminary planning with their new mentor. The interns received stipends for their participation during the pilot year, as they help design a partnership that will be continued and expanded in future years when grant support is no longer available.

5. Evaluation and Dissemination: Evaluation must be flexible enough to assess all components of a project. For this reason, as suggested by Newman and Benz (in press, 1997), qualitative and quantitative measures are being employed to assess project goals which include: making interns contributing members of the school culture, fostering collaborative linkages, empowering teachers, improving student attitudes and attainment, the development of effective *new work* models of instruction, and intern/student teacher development as a reflective teaching professional. Qualitative data sources include: journals, intern portfolios and management plans (yet to be developed), observer field notes and audio tapes, video tapes of classroom activities (taped by a professional videographer as well as interns and researchers), evaluation of *new work* curriculum and the increased use of technology in curriculum development. Quantitative evidence includes: pre and post attitude measures of interns, mentors and administrators, pre and post self-efficacy estimates of interns and mentors, and assessment of intern technological skills.

To be most effective, evaluation should be formative as well as summative (Newman, Frye, Blumenfeld and Newman, 1973; Newman and Newman, 1992). Through formative assessment, adjustments are continually being made in response to needs as they become apparent. This requires flexibility on the part of participants as well as the willingness to listen and problem solve. Formative assessments depends upon on-going feedback from the stakeholders through formal and informal interviews, group meetings and a periodic review of data collected. A review of pre-test data collected during the summer workshop provided us with a number of interesting correlations to be further investigated through interviews. The summative evaluation will include complete analysis of the year long data and a compilation of the curricular models of *new work*. These models will be presented as a monograph and will be distributed through local, county and state agencies to other teachers and school systems in the process of developing their own models of *new work*.

Educational Implications: The demands placed upon schools in recent years are greater than at any time in the past. Call for educational reform to better prepare children for careers in a global economy can be heard from

the White House to the individual home. Yet effective and long lasting change requires systematic planning that incorporates the varied perspectives of the multiple stakeholders. This often best occurs in a collaborative milieu in which interested parties can combine their talents and resources to design and bring about desired outcomes.

One target area for educational reform involves redesigning teacher education. Another calls for improved in-service training to help teachers rethink their professional roles and responsibilities and to develop more effective teaching strategies. Yet another area of reform calls for teaching students to effectively use technology so they will be able to move into the hi-tech twenty-first century.

The primary focus of this collaborative addresses pre-service, in-service and technology issues and incorporates the development of instruction that engages students in relevant learning. An additional important component, and the focus of the descriptive data reported in this paper, is to add to the data base being developed by the State of Ohio on the process collaborations. Through the analysis and reporting of this process the state is hoping to identify characteristics on which successful partnerships are built, to decrease the current expected failure rate of 66%. It is hoped that University of Akron-Barberton Public School model will continue to successfully evolve and that it can be used as a template to facilitate other educators attempting to implement educational reforms. It is a work in progress, but the sharing of the knowledge gained as the university and public schools grow together may be useful in guiding us as well as others in the quest to improve education at all levels.

TABLE 1

RESTRUCTURING THE COLLABORATIVE BASED ON PARTICIPANT DECISIONS

1. INTERNS WILL REMAIN IN EACH OF TWO PLACEMENTS FOR EIGHT WEEKS TO HAVE TIME TO BECOME PART OF THE CLASS CULTURE.

2. INTERN-MENTOR JOURNALS WILL BE READ ONLY BY CORRESPONDENTS, TO ALLOWS FOR MORE CANDID COMMUNICATION ON SENSITIVE ISSUES.

3. MENTOR TEACHERS WILL RESPOND TO 4 PROMPTS GENERATED BY THE RESEARCHERS AS A SOURCE OF QUALITATIVE DATA.

4. ON-SITE CLASSES WERE RESCHEDULED TO 7:30 AM AND 2:45 PM TO MAXIMIZE INTERNS TIME IN PLACEMENTS.

5. THE SUMMIT COUNTY TECH ACADEMY WILL PROVIDE INTERNS AND MENTOR TEACHER WITH A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF "NEW WORK," TO HELP THEM DEVELOP THEIR INTEGRATED THEMATIC UNITS.

6. THE SUMMIT COUNTY TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ESTABLISHED TWO LIST-SERVES- ONE FOR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND INTERNS, AND THE SECOND FOR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN INTERNS AND WITH FACULTY.

7. INTERNS AND THE MENTORS THEY WILL BE WITH FOR THEIR SECOND PLACEMENT WILL HAVE A CATERED HALF DAY SESSION TO PLAN THEIR NEW WORKING RELATIONSHIP.

TABLE 2

APPROPRIATE USES OF TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION

*Using QuickTake Cameras to develop hyperstudio presentations of school activities for parents at open house.

*Use e-mail and listservs as a communication link between:

- interns
- interns and mentors
- interns and university faculty
- university and public school teachers

*Use e-mail as a method for children to correspond among themselves and with other sources of information

*Teach children to develop their own multimedia presentations using Monster Media, QuickTake Cameras, scanners, selected internet web sites and the printer.

*Locate and access web sites to support the development of instruction

*Create individual web pages for interns to present themselves and branch to areas of their interests